

Message Text

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SUBJECT: APPOINTMENT OF DEPUTY MINISTERS

REF COLOMBO 2315

1. SUMMARY: APPOINTMENT OF SIX NEW DEPUTY MINISTERS IN LAST TWO DAYS AND TWO OTHERS RECENTLY FILLS ALL BUT ONE VACANT SLOT IN CABINET. NEW APPOINTEES ARE CAREFULLY BALANCED CASTE-WISE AND REGIONALLY AND APPEAR TO HAVE BEEN SELECTED WITH EYE ON UPCOMING ELECTIONS RATHER THAN IMPROVEMENT OF CABINET EFFICIENCY. END SUMMARY.

2. FIVE NEW DEPUTY MINISTERS WERE APPOINTED JULY 5 AND ONE ON JULY 6 TO FILL ALL BUT ONE CABINET VACANCY. THEY ARE:

RAJAWELEGAMA, M.P. MONERAGALA, DEPUTY MINISTER OF HEALTH
DHARMADASA WANNIARATCHI, M.P. PELMADULLA, DEPUTY MINISTER
OF INDUSTRIES AND SCIENTIFIC AFFAIRS

SENAPALA SAMARASEKERA, M.P. AKMEEMANA, DEPUTY MINISTER OF
PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION AND HOME AFFAIRS

L.B. JAYASANEAN M.P. BINGIRIYA, DEPUTY MINISTER OF LOCAL
GOVERNMENT

AUGUSTEENU FONSEKA, M.P. WENNAPPUWA, DEPUTY MINISTER OF
FISHERIES

M.M. MUSTAPHA, M.P. NITAVUR, DEPUTY MINISTER OF JUSTICE
WITHIN PAST TWO MONTHS, TWO OTHER DEPUTY MINISTERS HAVE BEEN
NAMED. W.A. ANANDA SIRISENA, M.P. RAMBUKKANA, WAS MADE DEPUTY
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MINISTER OF FOOD, COOPERATIVES AND SMALL INDUSTRIES AND P.M.K.

TENNEKON, M.P. MIHINTALE BECAME DEPUTY MINISTER OF CULTURAL AFFAIRS.

3. THESE EIGHT APPOINTMENTS LEAVE ONLY ONE VACANCY IN CABINET, THE DEPUTY MINISTERSHIP OF PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS AND SPORTS, A RATHER SMALL AND UNDEMANDING PORTFOLIO. TWO VACANCIES HAD RESULTED FROM THE DEATH LAST MONTH OF MINISTER OF HEALTH AND FISHERIES GEORGE RAJAPAKSE AND CONSEQUENT ELEVATIONS OF TWO DEPUTY MINISTERS (REFTEL). HOWEVER, SOME OF OTHERS HAVE BEEN VACANT SINCE SEPTEMBER 1975 OUSTER OF TROTSKYITE LANKA SAMA SAMAJA PARTY FROM CABINET AND FROM GOVERNMENT.

4. COMMENT: SINCE THERE HAD PREVIOUSLY BEEN NO APPARENT URGENCY IN FILLING THESE SLOTS, CURRENT ACTIONS APPEAR TO BE AIMED AT FIRING UP SIR LANKA FREEDOM PARTY (SLEP) RANKS FOR ELECTIONS, BE THEY IN A FEW MONTHS OR NEXT YEAR. APPOINTEES APPEAR TO BE FAIRLY UNDISTINGUISHED LOT, REFLECTING SHALLOWNESS OF UNTAPPED TALENT AVAILABLE IN SLEP PARLIAMENTARY PARTY, AND SELECTION SEEMS TO HAVE BEEN CAREFULLY CALCULATED POLITICAL MANEUVER. ALL PROVINCES ARE REPRESENTED IN EIGHT APPOINTMENTS, EXCEPT FOR ALREADY OVER-REPRESENTED WESTERN (COLOMBO) AND CENTRAL (KANDY) AND NORTHERN PROVINCE STRONGHOLD OF OPPOSITION TAMIL UNITED FRONT.

4. MIXED CASTE CHARACTER OF APPOINTMENTS TO CABINET HAS BEEN SCRUPULOUSLY MAINTAINED. OF EIGHT NEW MINISTERS, FOUR ARE HIGH-CASTE GOYIGAMAS, ONE IS OF KARAVA (FISHER) CASTE, TWO ARE LOW-CASTE WAHUMPURAS, AND ONE IS MOSLEM. IDEOLOGICALLY IT IS DIFFICULT TO SAY HOW THESE RELATIVELY UNKNOWN APPOINTEES STAND. HOWEVER, RADICAL JANAVEGAYA FACTION WITHIN SLEP HAS BEEN IGNORED IN SELECTIONS AND COMMUNIST PARTY HAS NOT BEEN OFFERED ADDITIONS TO ITS PRESENT ONE CABINET MINISTER AND ONE DEPUTY MINISTER.
REED

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